

I have written quite a lot in my submission about what I think is wrong with the EPA study. It is great that they did it, but I think they have come to some really illogical conclusions.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Gare: Thank you for inviting me to present my submission today. My submission deals with the impact on my health and lifestyle living in close proximity to a wind farm. Let me say from the outset that we were excited about the prospect of being part of the renewable electricity industry. I am a host to wind towers on my property, the nearest being about 800 metres away with three towers within approximately one to 1.5 kilometres away.

We were not made aware of the impacts of noise on our health or lifestyle. Fortunately, we had heard from others that they were quite noisy. Luckily, in our contracts we inserted clauses about the need for noise mitigation. I do wonder why though the wind tower operators inserted the following clause in all the hosts' contracts section 77C, which is on the memorandum of lease which I will table: 'The landlord acknowledges and agrees that it is adequately compensated for any noise or inconvenience caused as a result of the permitted use of the site or the land and that it will not seek any further compensation from the tenant in relation to such matters.' If the wind tower operators were confident of their impact studies, that clause would not be necessary.

After a short period of living with an operating wind farm, we had these products installed. I find that, because I work and reside in close proximity to the wind farm, I suffer sleep interruption, mild headaches, agitation and a general feeling of unease; however, this occurs only when the towers are turning, depending on the wind direction and wind strength. My occupation requires that I work amongst the wind towers during the day which means I suffer the full impacts of noise for days at a time without relief. The impacts are that we are not able to open our windows because of the noise at night and we are not able to entertain outside because of the noise.

In conclusion, if we did not have soundproof batts in VLam Hush windows, our house would not be habitable. In my opinion, towers should not be within five kilometres of residences, and I would personally not buy a house within 20 kilometres of a wind farm. Thank you.

Mrs Gare: Good afternoon Senators, and ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for letting me speak to the committee today. I would like to open my statement with the following: developers and construction. In the beginning, I was excited about the wind farm and of course the financial security for our property and family. The process began with high-pressure consultations, negotiations for weeks on end, numerous phone calls and face-to-face meetings with the developers. We seemed to be under constant pressure to agree to their wishes and, if we wanted any changes, it took a lot of negotiation.

We had to try and foresee any problems that may impact on our lifestyle for the next 25 years plus. With little or no previous information to go on, this was a very taxing time. Having gone through this, I would like to see that a person or persons—probably with a legal background and well-schooled in wind turbine information—be contactable for future wind farm hosts for advice and even to help with negotiations with the development companies.

Construction was also a very stressful and challenging time. The landowners are up against not only the power company but also all the big contractors and civil works companies. Any meetings with the above parties had to be attended by both of us with me taking notes so that we had some kind of record of what was said and what matters needed to be addressed at the time.

We had a lot of erosion problems from the pads and roadways, which we had to chase up with the power company to get them to address. During construction there were lots of problems with gates left open, boxing up mobs of cattle which then took a full day of redrafting and settling back into their paddocks. We also had gates opening onto public roadways. We have a main bitumen road that goes past our property. This caused great angst as far as public liability is concerned, if our stock got out into the roads. We also had lots of rubbish scattered around the property. We witnessed one of our cattle eating a one metre by one metre piece of plastic sheeting.

Living with wind turbines. Our house is solid sandstone, built for the late Charles Hawker in the 1920s, with concrete internal walls and a steel roof. The house is surrounded by a lot of vegetation and trees. I have brought some photos to show the Senate. In the months after the towers started in October 2010, the noise was unbearable, especially when two towers became in sync. A loud thumping would radiate throughout the house. Even watching TV in the furthest room from the towers, you could hear them. Sleeping was most difficult. I use, and still do, an earpiece radio every night, which helps block out the noise to a certain degree. If they are really going I have to up the volume.

After some time, due to a very slow installer, the house was finally insulated: sonobatts in the ceiling cavity; all our outside air vents blocked; a special American glass called VLam Hush, which is two sheets of glass with a

special gel between, were installed in every door and window of the house. This has improved the situation for me considerably, but at times the noise still penetrates into the house.

Ongoing issues. Due to the house being sealed we have refrigerated air conditioning, because we cannot open windows because of the noise. A separate meter was installed on the wind farm operator's advice, so that they could pay the cost of the air conditioning usage. That went in over 12 months ago and we are still chasing payment. Another issue is the increase in our emergency services levy. The value of our property has increased by double, which has had a major increase in the levy. The power company pay council rates on the land that they lease, and we pay rates on the rest. We brought up the issue of the increased ESL with the power company, but they have not addressed it. We feel they should be responsible due to the increase in our land value. I have the value difference here: I think it is about \$1.6 million increase. I quote from the contract, 6.1, rates and taxes, section B:

However, during each year of this lease the tenant must pay any increase in rates and taxes above the rates and taxes that were payable immediately before the start of the agreement to lease, if the increase is directly attributable to the works or the use of the site for the permitted use.

We also have ongoing problems with the cables which run across our property and connect into the individual towers to transport the power to a substation. There seem to be constant cable breakages, which have to be dug up and fixed. This, of course, happens all over the property. Having 19 towers, it has quite a big impact. Quite a large area is disturbed and then has to be recovered with sand or soil. We have asked for compensation concerning this, as we have numerous cable breaks on the property with disturbance to our pastures, which interferes with our stock grazing. This was discussed at a meeting back in August 2014. We are still waiting for compensation, which is agreed by the wind operators. As you can see, they are not fast movers.

The land owners need to know their rights in regard to their property and how it is treated during and after construction of towers. Land owners with residences close to towers need to be made aware of the noise impact and there should be discussion of how close towers should be permitted to their premises. In my opinion, towers should not be any closer than five kilometres to a dwelling. If we had to buy another property, it would not be within a 20-kilometre distance to a wind farm. I think that says it all.

We have a son who will come home in a couple of years, and I have concerns for him and a family that he might have in the future, with regard to any health problems that may arise. Having lived with towers now for five years, in my opinion future hosts should glean as much information as they can and find out their rights so they can fully understand what they are taking on.

Senator XENOPHON: I would just like to ask some questions to Mr and Mrs Gare. I think the fact that you are hosts of wind turbines and you are giving evidence is significant. How many turbines are there on your property?

Mr Gare: Nineteen.

Senator XENOPHON: How long have you had them there?

Mr Gare: Five years.

Senator XENOPHON: And when did your start complaining about the turbines in terms of the adverse impacts?

Mr Gare: Straightaway.

Senator XENOPHON: Is it AGL that you are dealing with?

Mr Gare: Yes.

Senator XENOPHON: You may want to provide us with any documents in respect of this. How did they deal with the process? Once you raised the issue, what happened?

Mr Gare: We had it in our contract that if we found there was a problem they would put in noise mitigation products. We said: 'You will have to do it. We cannot bear it.' Because it was in the contract they went along with it, but I am sure, Nick, that they would not have if they did not have to.

Senator XENOPHON: It is a contractual relationship so it is under the terms of the contract. Are you able to say—and you may not want to—what level of payment have you been getting? If you do not feel comfortable saying how much you are being paid for the 19 turbines on an annual basis, you do not have to.

Mr Gare: All up, in total, about \$200,000, so there is not a lot of advantage for us in coming here today.

Senator XENOPHON: When you experienced the noise, could you stay in the property or did you have to move out?

Mr Gare: If we did not have the noise mitigation products put in, we would have moved out.

Senator XENOPHON: Prior to the noise mitigation products being put in, how did it affect your sleep? Did you spend more time away from home?

Mr Gare: Fortunately, we have eastern rangeland country where I could go to get away from it. As I said in my submission, I am there 24 hours a day in amongst it. I had to go away to wind down. What was your question, sorry?

Senator XENOPHON: What period of time was it from the time the noise affected you until the time you had the noise mitigation—several weeks or several months? How long was it?

Mrs Gare: I reckon it took about 15 months or more. We had a very slow installer of the batts and things.

Senator XENOPHON: You are protected by parliamentary privilege when speaking out here today. Did AGL say to you: 'Sometimes this happens. It is just one of those things'? Did they give an explanation as to the level of disruption? Did they say, 'This has not happened before'?

Mr Gare: No. It was all glossed over right from the start. We were given no information. One of their little tricks is to take people right up to the towers and say, 'This is how noisy they are.' But that is not so. The further you get away from the tower the noisier they are. That is a funny thing, to a point I guess. When you are right underneath them and they are 80 metres up in the air there is very little noise. There is just a bit of wind noise. As you go away one or two kilometres it actually gets worse.

Senator XENOPHON: Before the noise attenuation or noise suppression in your home what was your quality of life like?

Mr Gare: Crap, to put it honestly.

Senator XENOPHON: You got a bit of sleep each night, didn't you?

Mr Gare: With earplugs, yes. I wore earplugs constantly—only while they are turning, mind you, and providing they are in the right direction and have the right wind strength. Frosty nights are the worst because the sound tends to travel so much clearer and further on a frosty night. But earplugs.

Senator XENOPHON: Anything else, Mrs Gare?

Mrs Gare: No. Pretty much what Clive has said.

Senator XENOPHON: Do you sleep okay now?

Mrs Gare: No, they were waking me up on the weekend. You wake up to the thumping. This is with all the soundproofing in the house. As I said, I sleep with the radio on every night. If they are really cranked up I have to turn the volume up, so I will probably just go slowly deaf.

Senator DAY: I just want to clarify something. Frosty nights are normally not very windy.

Mr Gare: That is a funny thing. Our country is very hilly, and they put wind farms on top of hills. It can be blowing an absolute gale on the top of the hills and you can have frost in the valley.

Senator DAY: It is just that we have heard evidence that, even when the blades are not turning, they do have a similar infrasound impact on people because of the effect of the wind across the blades, across the aerofoil.

Mr Gare: Yes, but if there is that much wind the blades are turning, aren't they?

Senator DAY: That is right.

Senator LEYONHJELM: If you had your time over again, would you host a wind farm?

Mr Gare: No, absolutely not. If I were a rich man, I would not have a wind farm on my property.

Senator LEYONHJELM: And you said it was \$200,000 over five years approximately?

Mr Gare: No, 12 months.

Senator LEYONHJELM: Per year.

Mr Gare: Yes.

Senator LEYONHJELM: That is a fairly healthy income.

Mr Gare: Absolutely.

Senator LEYONHJELM: In spite of that, you would say that you would not have them.

Mr Gare: Absolutely, if I were a rich man, but unfortunately I am a farmer and there are not many rich farmers around.

Senator LEYONHJELM: What sort of farming?

Mr Gare: We are grazing, we can be cropping but we—

Senator LEYONHJELM: Sheep or cattle?

Mr Gare: Mostly cattle.

Senator LEYONHJELM: Has there been any effect on your cattle from the wind farms?

Mr Gare: No.

Senator LEYONHJELM: Okay, thank you.

Mr Faint: Thank you for this opportunity. I am speaking on behalf and as the chair of the Waterloo and District Concerned Citizens Group, so I will speak broadly. I also have personal issues and I want to inform the committee that I have left the area. I now sleep and live in Kapunda but I still come up to the farm and work during the day. Like other people, I was having lots of sleep issues so we decided to move from Waterloo.

Obviously you have our submissions in front you, but I will add a couple of later things that we have done since we submitted them. We who live in the shadow of these enormous industries clearly have been impacted, and the consequences have been devastating. These include the splitting of the community, noise and health issues, and in four cases already families have been forced to leave the area. There is numerous environmental damage. It was mentioned before about the fox cull—in fact I conducted that fox cull—and we were alarmed at the loss of native birds and animals in the Waterloo wind farm area. There has also been a significant drop in property value.

The most serious thing now is the link between turbines and frost severity. Turbines cool the air and in our situation at Waterloo it is now causing a huge loss in food production and the viability of farms up to 10 kilometres and further away. We have been lobbying for a long time to have a setback of at least 10 kilometres from towns, farmhouses, frost-prone areas, cropping and vineyard land. Clearly changes have to be made and future locations carefully assessed. What is more important to Australia—the protection of our food bowl or the construction of costly and inefficient wind farms? I think the answer is obvious.

Senator DAY: That is first time that we have heard the cooling of the air effect resulting in a decrease in crop production. Do you have any estimates of the percentage of crop production or productivity declines as a result?

Mr Faint: Yes. We did a survey together with Mary. Of at least nine farmers within a five-kilometre radius of Waterloo, collectively there was a 70 per cent loss in our average cropping. This has happened for three consecutive years in the Waterloo area, and this is since the commissioning of the wind farm. We are in a frost-prone area, that is acknowledged, but we have never had such severe frosting. Normally, we would expect an area probably 100 or 200 metres from a creek bed but we have had our whole paddocks wiped out. After two years of frost damage we contacted the University of Adelaide to do a test. They were good enough to build a model wind farm and there they proved that turbines cool the air. They also established that the turbines at Waterloo were too close together—they are only 250 metres apart and they were in a continuous line—so this is causing a huge mass of cold air to form in the valley.

Senator DAY: If you could provide us with any documentation or any of your results, both from the university and from your own local studies, that would be very helpful to the committee.

Mr Faint: We have related that.

Mrs Quast: I will keep mine very brief. We are very concerned about the health issues of people living in the vicinity of wind farms. Having experienced them first hand, we do not wish anybody else to suffer as we are. We feel that the guidelines set by NHMRC need to be addressed. I was fortunate enough to attend a forum there a few years ago and they were not really very interested so I am happy to see that they are at least taking some notice now. The EPA has done lots of testing in the Waterloo area—we acknowledge that, as Mary did—but the results were certainly circumspect and I think they need to be addressed and investigated properly. As I stated in my submission, they put turbines in the most stupid places—under trees and other things.

The health issues could all stem from sleep deprivation from the noise and from the infrasound. Also, I have two dogs who have both been affected by the turbines. I take them for walks and they will stop and they will look at the turbines because they are making so much noise. They also bark at night because they think it is thunder. It is very loud, my house is not insulated and over the TV you can hear it. It is like a jet engine coming but that never gets there. Unlike traffic and planes, it does not stop. It is continuous 24-hours a day. I have kept a health diary from day 1 of the operation of the wind farms, and I have stated in there that I felt the effects immediately, and it gets worse. It is now quite a few years on and I am a lot worse than I was when I first noticed them operating. We have property we cannot build on because we would be 1,200 metres from the nearest turbines in a